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The type locality of the Olive Warbler (Peucedramidae)

by Richard C. Banks

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Lowery & Monroe (1968: 78) correctly stated that the original type locality (Mexique = Mexico) of *Sylvia taeniata* Du Bus, 1847 (now *Peucedramus taeniatus*) was restricted to San Cristóbal, Chiapas, by Brodkorb (1944). But, they added that Zimmer (1948a) had shown that the type probably came from San Pedro, Oaxaca. Perhaps they intended the latter statement to be accepted as a correction to Brodkorb’s designation, but it seems instead to have resulted in uncertainty and taxonomic confusion (Lowther & Nosedal 1997, Curson 2010). The two suggested type localities are on opposite sides of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which may (or may not) be the boundary of subspecific populations, one of which would be the nominate subspecies.

Hellmayr (1935: 360) may have been the first to restrict the type locality of *Sylvia taeniata* Du Bus, in the synonymy of *Peucedramus olivaceus* (Giraud, 1841), suggesting that ‘Mexique’ was ‘probably the state of Vera Cruz, where some of the other new Mexican birds described by Du Bus came from.’ Information in van Rossem (1942) shows that cannot be correct.

Van Rossem (1942) examined the type specimens of both *Cyanocorax unicolor* and *Sylvia taeniata* of Du Bus (1847) in the Brussels museum in 1939. Both specimens were collected by

Auguste Ghiesbreght, supposedly in Tabasco, Mexico, with a specimen of *Turdus rufitorques*. Hellmayr (1934) had previously pointed out that Tabasco was an unlikely locality for the montane *Cyanocorax*, and van Rossem (1942) cited evidence from P. Brodkorb and E. A. Goldman that there are no mountains in Tabasco high enough to accommodate these species. The assumption was that Ghiesbreght had gone from Tabasco into neighbouring Chiapas, perhaps without being aware of it. Van Rossem (1942) indicted that 'it is certain that Chiapas, not Tabasco, is the type region of both the above birds [*C. unicolor* and *S. taeniata*] . . . ' and 'a spot as close as possible to the Tabasco boundary should be selected . . . ' but left the definite selection to Brodkorb 'in view of his extensive work in Chiapas.'

Relative to *Sylvia taeniata*, van Rossem (1942) stated: 'Incidentally, Bonaparte's statement (Consp. Gen. Avium, 1, 1850: 309) that the subsequent plate (Esq. Orn. Livr. 6, 1850: pl. 28) was from a specimen from San Pedro, Oaxaca, is not correct. The type is the basis of the plate and I may add that Wilhelm Meise made a similar notation on the tag in 1938.'

Brodkorb (1944) expanded on van Rossem's comments and noted that Chiapas is the only Mexican state in which the three species (*Cyanocorax unicolor*, *Turdus rufitorques* and *Sylvia taeniata*) attributed to Tabasco by Du Bus occur. He restricted the type locality of *C. unicolor* [now *Aphelocoma unicolor*] 'to San Cristóbal, or as it is now called Ciudad de Las Casas, since this, the largest town in Chiapas, is the locality nearest Tabasco from which the species has been reported.' He further stated: 'For the reasons given under *Cyanocorax unicolor*, I restrict the type locality of *S. taeniata* to San Cristóbal, Chiapas.'

Zimmer (1948a) established that *Sylvia taeniata* of Du Bus was the name properly applied to the Olive Warbler, the name formerly in use (*Sylvia olivacea* Giraud) being preoccupied. Without mentioning Brodkorb's paper of 1944, Zimmer (1948a) attempted to fix the type locality of *S. taeniata* Du Bus or, more precisely, to determine to which named subspecies it applied. At his request, R. Verheyen of the Brussels museum and J. Delacour examined the type specimen. Zimmer (1948a) wrote: 'It is an old mounted bird and greatly faded, and in its present condition agrees best, according to Captain Delacour, with *jalisceusis*. If allowance is made, however, for considerable fading that must have taken place during the last century, I believe that assignment to *aurantiacus* is more strongly indicated.' Citing the Bonaparte (1850) work that van Rossem (1942) had discredited, Zimmer placed the type locality of *taeniata* at an indefinite San Pedro, Oaxaca. Zimmer did not indicate whose subspecific treatment he was following. The most recently preceding was that of Hellmayr (1935), who did not recognise *jalisceusis*, and he may have been following Miller & Griscom (1925), who saw no Oaxaca specimens and who did not mention that state in the range of any subspecies. Hellmayr (1935) included at least part of Oaxaca in the range of then nominate *olivacea* (which Zimmer renamed *giraudi*); *aurantiacus* was found in Guatemala (Miller & Griscom 1925) or Guatemala and Chiapas (Hellmayr 1935). Zimmer's placement of the type locality of *Sylvia taeniata* Du Bus in Oaxaca and his subspecific allotment of the type specimen to a subspecies found in Chiapas and Guatemala are seemingly incompatible.

Van Rossem (1948) pointed out that Zimmer (1948a) had overlooked earlier statements by himself (1942) and Brodkorb (1944). Zimmer (1948b) disputed van Rossem's (1942) claim that Bonaparte (1850) was wrong, and continued to follow Bonaparte's indication of San Pedro, Oaxaca, as the type locality until proven otherwise.

Webster (1958) was perhaps the first to give an ambivalent statement of the type locality: 'San Pedro, Oaxaca, or Chiapas, near Tabasco border.' Phillips (1966), when describing a new subspecies, *P. t. georgei*, said the adult male was 'similar to *P. t. taeniatus* (DuBus), 1847: Mexique' = 'Tabasco' (*i.e.* Jitotol, Chiapas, or a bit north); cf. Rovirosa, 1889', apparently introducing a new statement of the origin of Du Bus's type specimen based on the itinerary of Auguste Ghiesbreght, the collector of the type specimen.

Lowery & Monroe (1968: 78) mentioned the locality designations by Brodkorb (1944) and Zimmer (1948a), but not that of Phillips (1966). AOU (1983: 532) accepted Brodkorb's designation of San Cristóbal, Chiapas, without comment. Binford (1989: 344) agreed with AOU (1983), indicating that the type locality of *Peucedramus taeniatus* was in Chiapas rather than Oaxaca.

Phillips (1991: 10) equated Mexique of Du Bus to 'NEn [Northeastern] Oaxaca?' He further stated (p. 11) that 'Although most of Ghiesbreght's collecting was done in Tabasco and Chiapas, examination of the type he collected indicates the need of comparison with NEn Oaxaca birds, as above.' This statement, in effect, reflects Zimmer (1948a).

Finally, Lowther & Nosedal (1997) noted the two possible type localities of Brodkorb and Zimmer, as given by Lowery & Monroe (1968), and analysed the possible taxonomic scenarios that might result from one or the other type localities being accepted, dependant on how much morphological variation is recognised, stating again that 'Review of the type and additional material from this region is again necessary.' Once again, this suggests that if the type can be identified to a recognisable population, the type locality can be fixed to within the range of that population. This ignores the fact that the badly faded type has been of no taxonomic value since at least the 1940s.

According to Rovirosa (1891), the Belgian collector Auguste Ghiesbreght traveled to Tabasco in 1839. He and his companions worked actively in Tabasco, especially in the vicinity of Teapa, and in the mountains of Chiapas until March 1840 and amassed significant collections. There is no indication in Rovirosa's (1891) account of Ghiesbreght's activities that he was in or near Oaxaca in that period. Several years later, after 1855, he did work at or near Jitotol, Chiapas, the locality mentioned by Phillips (1966), but that was well after the description of *Peucedramus taeniatus*.

It seems certain that the type specimens of both *Cyanocorax unicolor* and *Sylvia taeniata* described by DuBus (1847), collected by Ghiesbreght in 'Tabasco,' must have come from the nearby mountains of Chiapas, as already stated by van Rossem (1942) and Brodkorb (1944). The type localities as restricted by Brodkorb (1944) to San Cristóbal, Chiapas, must stand, although perhaps better stated as San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, as presently indicated on many maps.

Thus, the nominate subspecies, *Peucedramus t. taeniatus* includes the birds of the mountains of Chiapas, Mexico, and Guatemala, and *P. t. aurantiacus* Ridgway, 1896, is a synonym. The western population, in Guerrero and Oaxaca, Mexico, is *P. t. georgei* Phillips, 1966.

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Remarks concerning the all-black coastal boubous (*Laniarius* spp.) of Kenya and southern Somalia

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Following the recommendation of Nguembock *et al.* (2008) that three races of the Tropical Boubou complex be treated specifically, namely *Laniarius (aethiopicus) major*, *L. (a.) sublacteus* and *L. (a.) erlangeri*, attention is now drawn to the taxonomic position of the all-black boubous occurring from the Tana Delta, Kenya, north to the Juba and Shabeelle valleys in southern Somalia, which most authorities have treated as rare black morphs of *L. (a.) sublacteus* and *L. (a.) erlangeri* (White 1962, Ash & Miskell 1998, Fry *et al.* 2000). With no all-black birds sampled in the Nguembock *et al.* (2008) study, the possibility of a major re-appraisal in our understanding of these coastal boubous has been missed.

On 15 July 1878 Gustav Fischer collected an all-black boubou at Kipini (Tana Delta) which Reichenow (1879) named *Dryoscopus nigerrimus*. In 1905, Reichenow named two further boubous, from the collections of Baron von Erlanger, both from the Juba Valley in southern Somalia. An all-black specimen was named *Laniarius erlangeri*, whilst a more typical black-and-white bird was named *Laniarius aethiopicus somaliensis*.

Van Someren (1922: 116, 1932: 307), after comparing topotypes of Reichenow's two described forms (*erlangeri* and *somaliensis*) with his own material from Kipini, Manda, Lamu and Juba, seriously questioned the validity of *erlangeri* and *nigerrimus*. Grant & Mackworth-Praed (1944), making no mention of any all-black birds, recognised *L. ferrugineus somaliensis* and *L. f. sublacteus* as the two coastal forms of Tropical Boubou, and Stresemann (1947) having examined *nigerrimus* argued it was just a morph of the sympatric black-and-white *L. f. sublacteus*, despite that van Someren (1922) considered that his specimens from Lamu exhibited intermediate features. Subsequently, White (1962), Ash & Miskell (1998), Fry *et al.* (2000) and Dickinson (2003) also recognised *L. aethiopicus sublacteus* and *L. a. erlangeri* as the two East African coastal boubous, although White (1962) failed to mention either *nigerrimus*